

DECISION MEMO
FERAL HOG CONTROL
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST,
BLACK KETTLE & MCCLELLAN CREEK NATIONAL GRASSLANDS
ROGER MILLS, OKLAHOMA - GRAY & HEMPHILL, TEXAS

The Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands located in Roger Mills County, Oklahoma and Gray and Hemphill Counties, Texas are diverse prairie ecosystems that are being negatively impacted by the invasive species feral hogs/swine (*Sus scrofa*). Feral swine by nature are destructive mammals through rooting and foraging. In fact, this invasive species costs the United States an estimated \$1.5 billion each year in damages and control costs as reported by USDA-APHIS. They have a keen sense of smell and will forage on many types of native vegetation and animals to include: roots, tubers, mast -hard (acorns, pecans) and mast (grapes, persimmon); grains (wheat, barley and oats), insects, rodents, reptiles, eggs, birds, fawns, small mammals and many other items. USDA-APHIS estimates that feral swine have played a role in the decline of nearly 300 native plants and animals in the United States alone. Over 250 of these species are threatened or endangered, while others are valuable game animals or important native forage plants. Feral swine impact native species and ecosystems in a variety of ways— from direct predation or competition to altering ecosystems and destroying habitats through their destructive foraging, trampling, and wallowing behaviors. Feral swine are highly adaptive animals that are also prolific breeders. A single female can potentially produce 50 young in a year. The current U.S. population is estimated at 74.3 million feral swine and increasing. Wildlife professionals estimated that 68-70 percent of feral swine must be removed in order to keep numbers in check.

Feral swine are known carriers of diseases that are infectious to other wildlife, livestock, pets and humans. They carry at least 30 diseases and nearly 40 types of parasites, these include: pseudorabies, trichinosis, hog cholera, swine brucellosis, tuberculosis, tularemia, anthrax, vesicular diseases, lungworms, kidney worms, liver flukes, thorny-headed worms, swine stomach worms, and hog lice.

Cultural and Historic resources are affected by feral swine. These resources include national historic sites, archaeological sites, burial grounds and sacred tribal sites. Through their rooting, feral swine destroy vegetation, disturb soil and damage structures which impact the integrity of historic sites.

This area lies in the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek Management Area (MA) as allocated in the 2012 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle, and McClellan Creek National Grasslands. This area is managed for maintaining a healthy landscape

and to promote diversity of flora and fauna. This project fulfills one of the Grasslands-wide desired conditions on invasive plants and animals that the feral hog population is diminishing or nonexistent. This project also meets the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek MA desired conditions for functioning existing and new wildlife habitat improvements.

DECISION

I have decided to allow the control of feral hogs utilizing trapping, shooting, snaring, and aerial gunning. The Black Kettle District objective is to maintain and improve the health of the grassland. The removal of these animals will aid in reducing the potential spread of diseases to other wildlife, bovine and humans. Additionally, the removal will aid in reducing damage to the landscape and will also reduce negative take of native plants and wildlife species by feral hogs.

This action will include all parcels of the Black Kettle Ranger District where feral hogs/swine are or maybe found.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6), Timber Stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 miles of low standard road construction. This category of action(s) is applicable because it directly references the activities being proposed.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – A Biological Evaluation was prepared for terrestrial, aquatic and plant species. There are no threatened, endangered, or proposed plants or animal species identified in the project area, nor has the project area been identified as critical habitat. Thus, this project will not affect threatened, endangered or proposed species. Formal consultation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service is not required.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – The Black Kettle National Grassland (BKNG) consults with five tribes that may have uses or may continue to use the National Grasslands for traditional cultural or religious purposes. These tribes include the Kiowa, Apache, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Comanche and the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes. Tribal consultation was not conducted for this project. The Feral Hog Trapping project meets the criteria of a Miscellaneous Recurrent Project (MRP), as it involves the installation of a wildlife range improvement. MRPs are a class of activities which are rarely planned in advance, as they are generally performed on an as-needed basis. Most represent routine, recurrent, maintenance-level projects.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – This undertaking is considered exempt under Appendix A. Section II L. (Activities that involve less than 1 square meter

of cumulative ground disturbance, unless within known sites) of the First Amended Region 3 Programmatic Agreement and requires no further Section 106 Consultation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed on March 2, 2020 as a proposal on the Cibola National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. A one on one consultation was conducted with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Biologist Marcus Thibeaux regarding feral hogs on the BKNG in Oklahoma. For Lake Marvin recreation area and McClellan Creek NG a one on one consultation was conducted with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Wildlife Biologist Chadd Malone. Both biologists recognize the destructive nature of feral hogs/swine and the importance of management in order to maintain a healthy prairie ecosystem. Each support and recommend the removal of feral hogs/swine from the Cibola National Forest, Black Kettle Ranger District.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the 2012 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands, which was developed in accordance with the National Forest management Act of 1976, 16 USC 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.10(e). The project was designed in conformance with the 2012 plan direction for the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek MA which states “Desired Conditions- the feral hog population is diminishing or nonexistent” (USDA Forest Service 2012). This project is also consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), the Endangered Species Act (1973), the Federal Clean Water Act (1972) and the Clean Air Act (1977). This action does not result in Environmental Justice issues, as defined in Executive Order 12898.

I have also considered the effect of this project on climate change, as well as the effect of climate change on this project. Any resulting greenhouse gas emission would not be measurable on a global scale.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to notice, comment, or appeal.

As a result of the President signing into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (Pub. L. No. 113-76) and the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) (Pub. L. No. 113-79), the Forest Service will no longer offer notice, comment, and appeal opportunities pursuant to 36 CFR 215 for categorically excluded projects.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.



CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Todd Stewart, Wildlife Biologist, Black Kettle National Grassland, 18555 Hwy. 47A, Suite B, Cheyenne, OK 73628.

Tom Smeltzer
District Ranger

Date 06/12/2020

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